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# Ex-Convict, Suspected of Aiding Escaped Spy, Seized

By JACK JONES, Times Staff Writer

A former prison mate of escaped Rancho Palos Verdes spy Christopher Boyce has been arrested in New Jersey by federal officers, who believe he helped Boyce flee to South Africa, it was reported Friday.

Frank Abbott Sweeney, 38, also known as Francis August Shellhammer, was taken into custody Thursday at his Closter, N.J., home on a charge of being a felon possessing firearms.

However, it was apparent from affidavits filed in federal court in Newark that the long surveillance and arrest of Sweeney, who is purported to have been a former mercenary in Rhodesia, was prompted by official belief that he was involved with Boyce.

Sweeney aided Boyce in his escape by assisting him out of the continental U.S. to the country of South Africa and is currently in possession of written documents regarding Boyce's whereabouts, said an affidavit filed by Thomas Kupferer, chief inspector of the U.S. Marshals Service.

Boyce, 28-year-old son of a former FBI agent, was convicted with a friend of selling to the Soviets in Mexico City information from TRW Systems Group in Redondo Beach about Pyramider, a never-launched CIA satellite project.

He was serving a 40-year sentence when he escaped from the federal prison at Lompoc by scaling two fences on Jan. 21, 1980. He has been sought ever since.

The affidavits filed by Kupferer in Newark also indicated that one thing pointing to a link between

Sweeney and Boyce was a letter found recently in an apartment in Hermosa Beach.

According to the information, the apartment had been abruptly vacated by a Thomas Sullivan, who was known to the landlord as Col. George Leslie.

The unidentified landlord reportedly told federal agents his tenant had been gone from the apartment for several weeks and was behind in his rent.

However, he allegedly left behind the letter from Sweeney, who addressed him as "Dear Colonel" and referred to "our escaped friend."

The letter reportedly said, "Somehow they discovered that I helped get him into South Africa. I suspect an informer has been at work. If the feds contact you, say nothing. Don't mention that I contacted you. Be your usual obnoxious self."

In fact, Sweeney was said to have written the authorities "have managed to pinpoint the exact geogra-

phical area" where Boyce could be found in South Africa.

## Federal Officials

No one in the U.S. Marshals Service would comment on the case Friday.

Nor would Hermosa Beach police, who said they felt compelled to let federal officials release any information about the beach city apartment.

In Newark, Sweeney was released on \$250,000 bond by U.S. Magistrate Serena Perretti, who set Aug. 5 for a bail review hearing for the curlyhaired and unshaven man.

## Espionage Charges

There were indications that authorities feel he will cooperate with them on the Boyce matter.

The affidavits said Sweeney met Boyce in 1977 when they were both held in the federal prison at Terminal Island. Sweeney was serving time for mail fraud while Boyce was awaiting his trial on espionage charges.

Sweeney also has served time for the attempted murder of a police officer, it was reported. That charge grew out of a shootout.

According to the affidavits, one of which was filed to support the placing of a hidden radio transmitter on Sweeney's automobile, he frequently led officers on wild pursuits during the weeks they were tailing him.

He reportedly made many sharp U-turns and took other evasive action, fully aware he was being followed.

Generally, it was indicated, the surveillance took place over the last two months.

Although one of the affidavits said Sweeney joined the Rhodesian army as a mercenary in 1977, the Newark Star-Ledger reported Sweeney actually was serving a state prison term during that year.

That was the year Boyce was convicted of selling information to the Russians about the spy satellite system being developed by TRW, where he worked in a high-security job as a clerk.

Thousands of top-secret documents were sold to Russian agents by Boyce and his Palos Verdes Peninsula friend, Andrew Lee.

Lee, also convicted, is serving a life sentence.